

John A. Chase

4436 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. N.

Great Falls, MT 59405

November 25, 2014

Great Falls Planning Board/Zoning Commission

SUBJECT: Proposed zone change on Lots 11-13, Block 12, Morningside Addition

I'm not exactly pleased with the prospect of a three-story structure on the property, but I won't oppose it if the following issues are made a part of any permits needed for the project to proceed.

1. I do not want a three-story structure located on the lot immediately adjacent to my house. Keep that portion of the building as far to the east as possible.
2. Drainage: Any concentrated runoff from roofs or concrete slabs **MUST NOT** be allowed to percolate into the ground in the area near my house! Water pouring off the roof of the former church in the area adjacent to my house is viewed as the principal reason why the west facing wings of the church were leaning outward toward my house and the east end of my house settled 7". As far as I know, the church was abandoned and torn down, in part because of structural damage that resulted in failure to address necessary drainage from the site. It cost me \$11,000 to have my house (foundation, footings, and all) raised and supported with steel piers. The contractor was not able to actually level the structure. I DO NOT WANT A REPITITION OF THAT COSTLY PROCESS!
3. The silver poplar on the SW corner of the property in question was cut down several years ago. The root system is still intact and sends up shoots all over, mostly in my yard because I water the lawn! I don't know if it is even possible to kill off one of these trees along with its extensive root system. PLEASE have a qualified person chemically treat (or do whatever else is necessary) to exterminate the blasted thing. Refer to the enclosed photographs and text for some kind of clue as to what kind of problem it has been for me.

John Chase





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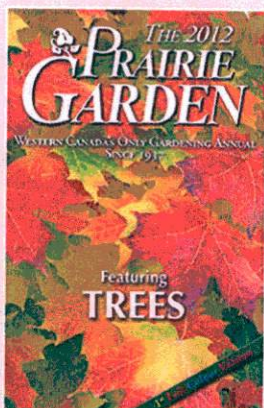
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### For The Love Of Trees

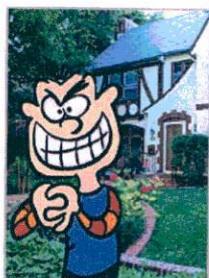


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## Northscaping for Northern Gardeners

### Info Zone Articles

ARTICLE: **Planting Revenge On Your Neighbors**  
 SUBTITLE: **Plants You'll Want To Keep Out Of Your Yard**  
 CATEGORY: Info Sheet  
 AUTHOR: James Kohut, Staff Writer



So you're a gardener and you have a bone to pick with your neighbor. You've considered applying Na cat, but you don't have the heart to be cruel to animals. You've thought about stepping on her tulips, knows the boots you wear.

As a fellow gardener who cares deeply about your personal needs and challenges, let me offer to be "back door man", if you will. I happen to know a few dark secrets of the gardening realm that will enable you to get your long-sought-after revenge on that neighbor by simply planting a few things in your own yard then waiting for the revenge to exact itself "organically", so to speak.

But seriously now, I didn't really write this article to tell you how to get even with your neighbor. No, I writing this article a little tongue-in-cheek to give you information on some nasty plants that you really should think twice about before bringing into your own yard. The way I see it, you'd have to pretty well be willing to sacrifice your own yard first before your neighbor would even start feeling the adverse effects of the nasty plants. If you're really willing to go such lengths for revenge, then don't call me, I'll call you...

So anyway, here's a list of the top plants you'll want to keep away from your yard and your neighbors' too, unless you're looking for and you're more than willing to lop off that nose of yours to spite your face.

### Un-Neighborhoodly Trees

#### First Place: White/Silver Poplar (*Populus alba*)

This is a category with a number of worthy contenders to the crown, but after talking to a whole group of my Northscaping friends from around the country, this one emerged as the most despised tree of all. Let me put it this way; if your neighbor, or your neighbor's neighbor, or even your neighbor's neighbor's neighbor, has a white poplar in their yard, at some point in your life you can look forward to having little white poplars springing up in your yard and your gardens. No, it doesn't matter that their tree is 50 or more feet away - this tree doesn't really respect property lines or distance calculations.



White poplar

All poplars have a tendency to send up shoots from their roots a good distance away from the parent tree when the roots are disturbed or as the parent tree ages and dies. But none is as brazen about it as the white poplar. This tree doesn't even bother waiting for a disturbance or other act of nature to justify suckering itself yards away (literally) from the parent, and in some very inappropriate places (for example, your garden, your lawn, or against your house).

As if this charming resume weren't enough to discourage you from ever wanting one of these misfits in your neighborhood, let's add to it the very weak branching habit and the susceptibility to cankers, which means that eventually these misfits will come crashing down on whatever happens to lie beneath; fence, house, dog, or even you... They aren't long-lived, and when they finally do, they make sure to intensify your pain by celebrating your loss with a suckering festival around your yard and the 4 or 5 yards near you for the next few years. This tree is really determined to leave a lasting legacy.

As a landscape designer, I can't think of any application where this tree would be appropriate given this nasty habit it possesses. If you desire the silvery undersides of the leaves, plant a silver maple. If you like the white bark, go for a birch or aspen. The only reason you would ever want to plant one of these in your yard is because you have a long-standing vendetta to settle with your neighbor and you like your time doling out the punishment, or because you are a masochist and look forward to spending your retirement years mowing up little poplar shoots in your now-ugly lawn.

#### Runners Up:

Quite frankly, any of the poplars (*Populus* spp.) will eventually become liabilities to both you and your neighbors. They all have an unfortunate tendency to send up suckers from their roots when they are disturbed or when the parent plant dies. At least most of the poplars have some landscape merits and are content to wait for old age before they become a problem (kind of like what I hope to do one day!).

But let's not end with poplars. We also have virtually any willow (*Salix* spp.) trees, which the experienced yardowner will know have



Siberian elm

of dropping entire branches every year (it gives an interesting idea to "fall" when half of the tree falls...). Dangerous it is not, but anyone touched by its reach will come to dread the annual gathering ritual.

How about a flowering crab (*Malus* spp.) hanging over onto your neighbor's yard, you know, that produces an abundance of large juicy crab apples that decompose to a squishy brown contact with the ground? Or hickory and buckeye nuts which become lethal projectiles when up by the lawnmower?

And we can't ever forget the Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*), which was #2 in my informal survey. Besides a propensity for disease and weak branching, this plant may be the most prolific seed producer in the plant kingdom, sort of the dandelion of trees. Its seeds will germinate in your morning coffee if you give them the chance, and there are more than enough of them to go around. Now if only Siberian elm seeds were a crop...

coffee if you give them the chance, and there are more than enough of them to go around. Now if only Siberian elm seeds were a crop...

### Un-Neighborly Shrubs

#### First Place: Glossy Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)

Here's a plant that if planted in your yard, will manage to become a threat to your yard, to your neighbors' yards, to your whole neighborhood and to your entire community. These weeds-with-branches are so prolific in their ability to spread via seed that they are actually outlawed in many communities, and I mean that literally.

The problem is that birds are fond of the small black fruits they produce in abundance, and eat them liberally. The seeds inside of the fruits are not digested and pass right through the birds (you can let your imagination take over at that point if you must know further details) everywhere and anywhere they go about doing their business. And then these gazillion seeds sprout and try to replace all of the natural vegetation in the area.

I almost feel like I'm doing your entire community a disservice by even telling you about this shrub, never mind your neighbors. These plants need to be eradicated, plain and simple, because they've escaped cultivation and are threatening our native ecosystems all across the North. They aren't welcome here, that's for sure. So unless you hate yourself, your neighbors and your whole community, don't bother bringing this cretin of the plant world to your world.



Glossy buckthorn

#### Runners Up:



Smooth sumac in fall

Some other shrubs that could strain your friendships with the neighbors? Smooth sumac (*Rhus glabra*) suckers and it suckers profusely from a very young age. This shrub will fill in a large area in a few short years, and it doesn't respect lawns, property lines or any other human-imposed boundaries. So, if it happens to be your garden or your lawn, or worse, your neighbor's, you can expect to have little sumac popping up here and there, not at your behest but at the parent plant's.

Don't get me wrong, this plant does have some wonderful ornamental attributes. It displays some of the finest fall colors of any shrub, ranging from a rich fiery red to a blend of burnt orange, yellow and scarlet on the same plant. It has very tropical-looking compound foliage and a distinctive growth habit, along with colorful candle-shaped fruit in late summer and fall. Luckily, you can actually use its suckering tendency as an advantage; combined with the fact that this shrub is drought-tolerant and roots solidly, it makes a great stabilizer for slopes, especially those newly created or disturbed. Or, it can be strategically planted in a way as to contain it, for example between a concrete sidewalk and a garage.

Nothing says "You Ain't Welcome Here" like a thick hedge of Japanese barberries (*Berberis thunbergii* spp.); the neighbor's kids will try crawling through them once, and only once. Same with the Scottish rose (*Rosa spinosissima*), with a unique way of saying "I love you" while driving spiny little swords into your side.

Or you can plant a hedge of raspberries (*Rubus* spp.) along the property line, which sucker like weeds and have no landscape merit. Unless, of course, your neighbors happen to like raspberries! How about poison ivy? Too obvious, and if you are willing to plant this yard to get even with the neighbors, you are already an unstable individual and I don't want to talk to you anymore...

### Un-Neighborly Perennials

#### First Place: Variegated Bishop's Goutweed (*Aegopodium podagraria*)

OK, so this one is not even a contest. Anyone who has ever had the misfortune of planting this little devil or having it resident in their yard, or worse, in a neighbor's yard, knows what I mean. This plant is harder to eradicate than a mother-in-law who lives next door in a mortgage-free house.

What's even worse about this plant is that it tempts the unwitting gardener with its delightful white-variegated leaves that are actually highly attractive right from spring to snow. And it's easy to grow, so easy in fact that even the worst gardener in the North, whoever that might be, couldn't help but do a fine job with this plant.

But don't fall prey to the sweet songs of this siren. Of all the plants I've listed in this entire article, this baby is by far the most aggressive and invasive. It will grow anywhere and for any reason it can think of, and it will spread like a disease. It will spread through a garden, it will spread into a lawn, it will even attempt to grow in grass mulch or concrete. And if you plant it anywhere near your neighbor's yard, it will gladly try and overrun their property as well. It has one objective in your yard, and that is to be the only plant in your yard.

And yet, I have actually seen one or two good uses of this plant, and I do stress only one or two. It is safe to put into a fully contained planter which will never allow its roots to ever touch the ground; it still hasn't figured out a way to relocate itself from total containment (although I'm sure it's working on it as we speak...). Still, unless you like to flirt with disaster, this plant is best left as a picture on the internet where it can't harm you or your yard.

#### Runners Up:

Other nasty perennials? There are all kinds of spreaders that will gladly reach out and touch your nei



Variegated bishop's goutweed



Variegated ribbon grass

gardens, whether by using runners, stolons or by seed. Variegated ribbon grass (*Phalaris arundinacea 'Picta'*) is the ornamental grass equivalent of bishops goutweed; it looks as attractive and is about as invasive. The same containment rules apply here.

Another honorable mention goes to the chameleon plant (*Houttuynia cordata*), which although I've never grown one, is apparently quite vigorous and very unwelcome in a garden setting. You could also "ferr" neighbors out of their yard with the surprisingly mobile ostrich fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*), but it might actually end up looking like an interesting landscape approach instead.

The list of vigorous spreaders goes on; lamium, creeping jenny, periwinkle. Ironically, many of these perennials make great groundcovers given their tenacity and willingness to grow anywhere. As long as you can contain them, they can actually be useful!

OK, so I trust you all realize that this whole article is written in a tone of jest, and that by no means am I recommending that you actually plant any of these anywhere near your yard unless you know exactly what you're doing. You'd not only run the risk of starting or intensifying a feud, but you'll also end up bringing down your own property value. I can't figure out why you would ever want to do that.

The lesson to learn here is that not all plants are right for your yard or gardens, and some can even adversely affect your neighbors as well. Too often we overlook how our decisions will impact them because we're so absorbed in our own worlds. Good Northscaping is about helping their neighbors, so not only will you not bring these into your yard or use them judiciously, you'll also inform your neighbors about these hazards and make sure they don't make the same mistake. You'll both be better off for it!

[\(back to top of page\)](#)


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John A. Chase  
4436 3rd Ave. N  
Great Falls, MT 59405-1425



